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A LETTER TO A FRIEND,

Concerning the late

ANSWERS

TO A

Letter to the Dissenter.

(5. F.)

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A Letter to a Friend Concerning the late Anſwers to a Letter to the Diſſenter.

Dear Sir,

YOU have infinitely obliged me in ſending the ſeveral Anſwers to the Letter to the Diſſenter: For notwithſtanding the many Reflections upon the Church of *England* which I find there, yet I cannot but heartily laugh to obſerve how afraid ſome people are leſt the Diſſenters, thoſe eſpecially who have moſt Money as well as Underſtanding ſhould like that better, and be a little aware how they are made Tools to do miſchief both to themſelves and others. But that which pleaſeth me moſt of all is to find that thoſe two Incomparable Worthies Sir R. *L.* and *H. C.* whoſe former writings had like to have ſet the people together by the Ears, do now lovingly accord together to the Satisfaction of the whole Nation, and notwithſtanding their former Fewds and Bickerings can now write both on the ſame ſide.

Nor do I ſee any ſuch neceſſary Contrariety between Infallibility and Liberty, ſaith H. C. p. 11. *Why then this Liberty and Infallibility truly underſtood and rightly diſtinguiſhed may very well ſtand together*; *and the holding the one Opinion does not at all claſh with permitting the Exerciſe of the other*; ſaith Sir R. L. p. 7.

Whereas we ſee many places where both Papiſts and Proteſtants live very quietly together, ſaith H. C. p. 3. *To ſay nothing of the freedom they are allowed in divers places where they live intermixt*, ſaith Sir. R. p. 10.

There is a great difference, quoth H. C. p. 29. *between repealing a Law, and relaxing or dispencing with the Penalty. The first can only be done in Parliament, the latter has been always adjudged to be part of the Royal Prerogative. The King*, quoth Sir R. *suspends by his Prerogative, but a Total Repeal must be the work of his Majesty in Parliament, which does not yet hinder the Temporary Virtue of a Temporary Suspension.*

When I considered these and the like Passages, wherein our two Patriots to the welfare of the Publick do now so happily agree; I could not at first keep out of my mind a foolish Suspision, that these Gentlemen were certainly two of the *Midiators of the new Alliance*, which the Letter to the Dissenter makes mention of, and that all their former Jangling was only in Jest and by Agreement. And, to tell you all; the temptation was very strong upon me for a while, to believe that besides the common work which they were both imployed about, they meant nothing else by their pretended Quarrel, then to obtain some modest Allowances for their necessary Occasions, the one from the Church of *England*, the other from the Dissenters. But I soon blamed my self for suspecting that Men of their Integrity and Fortunes could ever be perswaded to condescend to so mean, not to say so unworthy an Undertakeing.

At last consulting Sir *R.* about it, I found him to have salved the Difficulty, *p.* 12. where he tells that *according to a change of Circumstances, a Man of Principles may vary his Judgment with a respect to* Hic *and* Nunc, *as to some particular*: and consequently that

in how great Eſteem ſoever they may have formerly been there may be a time, wherein one Book called *Toleration diſcuſs'd* may be of no uſe at all, and another called the *Pacquets of Advice* ſhall be quite out of Seaſon. For *Then was Then, and Now is Now.*

But whatever may have cauſed this Alteration, which happens to appear in theſe Gentlemens Writings; it gives me occaſion to be very merry ſometimes, with ſome of their wonted Admirers: For whenever I get ſome of my Tory Parſons near me. Behold, cry I, your *Obſervator* pleading for Liberty of Conſcience, and for Accomodations. does not this deſerve a ſecond Contribution? ------ And no ſooner are they gone, and ſome of the *Non-Cons* (with whom I am acquainted) come to make me a Viſit, but I preſently fetch out *H.C*'s Anſwer. Look you Gentlemen, ſay I, the Papiſts are not ſuch cruel people as you imagined; and you were baſely abuſed in the *Weekly Advices* which you were wont to receive from *Rome.*

Both Parties ſcratch their Heads upon this Occaſion, and ſome endeavour to defend their Writings; but others ſwear they will never truſt any of theſe mercenary Scriblers for the future.

But the beſt of all is this, that notwithſtanding this ſtrong Confederacy of theſe mighty Men againſt a poor ſingle Letter; they are not agreed of what ſort of Kidney he is who wrote it.

H. C. will have him to be an high-flown perſecuting Church of *England* Man; but Sir *R.* inſinuates p. 26. as if he were a Diſſenter, or at leaſt a Diſſenters Fellow

But

But be he who he will it is both their Opinions, that his Deſign is nothing but to ſtir up Fears and Jealouſies, and therefore that it is as much as the Diſſenters Lives are worth to mind one word what he ſaith to them.

Now let a Writer be what he will, when ſo much Pains is taken, and by ſuch different Tools, to bring about what it ſeems that Letter would obſtruct: were I a Diſſenter, I ſhould be a little tempted to conſider the Purport of it. And if ſo many Thouſands thereof have as Sir *R.* aſſerts, been ſold, the Printer is moſt of all beholden to the Number as well as the dulneſs of the Anſwers to it.

But certainly *R.* is moſt of all to be blamed in reference to the ſpreading of it; for he has cauſed it to be Printed almoſt intire, as well as added a foil to ſet it off.

I ſuppoſe I ſhall be accounted at leaſt a Trimmer for talking at this rate. But one would think that according to Sir *R.* meaning of that word (who makes a Trimmer to one who is always ready to change with the Times) he himſelf was much more ſo: For his Judgment it ſeems can alter *pro hic & nunc:* and notwithſtanding for three whole Volumes of Obſervatrs, who at laſt ſo kind as he and a Diſſenter?

And why may not my Anſwer be addreſſed to a Diſſenter too, p. 2. Ay why not to a Diſſenter? my Old dearly-beloved Diſſenter? And then as if he would hug him to death at parting he concludes *dear Sir, your moſt affectionate humble Servant.*

As for the other meaning of the word Trimmer whereby I always underſtood one that was for making the

Terms

Terms of Commuuion as eaſie as he could, and for allowing ſuch a Liberty as might be conſiſtent with the publick Safety; I care not who thinks me ſuch a one. And although I do not pretend to promiſe any thing in the behalf of others, yet I am apt to believe that many of our Beſt Divines both are and have all along been of the ſame Mind, and had it not been for Men of ſuch a Temper as Sir *R. L. S.* and H. *C.* and the College in a certain place beyond the Seas for the propagating of that Faith; things had tended that way long before now.

Is it not pleaſant to obſerve that in the very ſame Paper one of theſe ſhould be able to detect a Conſpiracy of Common-wealths Men; and the other a Plot both of the Latitudinarian Divines and high-flown Church-men: That the one ſhould find fault with the Author thereof for his Moderation, as being therefore no Genuine Son of the Church of *England*; and the other inſinuate as if no moderation were intended: and becauſe his wonted Clamor *No Popery, No Arbitrary Government*, will now take, ſtretches his Throat with bawling *No Perſecution, No Perſecution.*

I meddle not with the ſubject matter of the preſent debate, the *Teſts* and *penal Laws*, but I could be glad to have none of us mind what the *Knaves* and the *Beggars* ſay concerning them. For theſe alway wreſt every thing to the worſt ſenſe, widen the Breaches, which honeſt men endeavour to cloſe, and are not ſo much concerned for Truth, as that they can get moſt money for writing.

For the reſt of the Anſwers to the Letter which you

ſent

ſent me, we are very much beholden to the Authors, for diſcovering by many undoubted Characters who they are, for they are neither colouging Diſſenters as *H. C.* is, nor half-faced Church of *England* Proteſtants, as is Sir *R.* but downright honeſt Papiſts. This ſame Letter thought I has brought good company together.

As to the *Diſſenters*, notwithſtanding this noiſe about Perſecution; I hope they will be ſo wiſe as to conſider from whence the orders about it came from time to time: and likewiſe what were the times and ſeaſons when it was moſt ſet on foot; that for ſecret reaſons they have had their worſe and their better days, as if they had been one while ſwinged off to ſowre them againſt the Church, and another while ſtroaked that they might live to remember it: Laſtly, that when any of the Church Party talked on the ſevere ſide, the reaſon of that was no ſecret. Whilſt polling at *Guildhall* for ſuch as had once overturn'd the Government, it could not be expected but that it ſhould give occaſion to ſome who were zealouſly concern'd for the preſent Eſtabliſhment, and for the welfare both of his preſent and late Majeſty, to be more hot againſt them than otherwiſe they would have been.

But if neither the Conſideration of theſe things, nor of any thing elſe can deter them from doing what it is intended they ſhall, nor from dividing the Body and the Intereſt of the *Engliſh* Reformation.

All the harm *I* wiſh is that they do not at the long run bring that both upon themſelves and others which they are at preſent ſo much concerned to avoid.

I am yours

S. F.